

# Church snub for breath sessions

CHURCH of England officials are distancing themselves from intensive breathing workshops with a Findhorn connection being held in association with a programme of events run by a London church.

Secretary to the church's Board of Responsibility Mr David Skidmore has stressed that the Church of England has not given its blessing to the intensive breathing exercises. The exercises, known as holotropic breathwork, were suspended from the Findhorn Foundation following a Scottish Charities Office report.

"Neither the House of Bishops nor the General Synod has expressed an official view on this subject," he said. "The only comments I am aware of from Church of England sources have expressed negative views of the breathwork technique."

He said as a result of information given to the board for social responsibility the matter was being investigated further.

Forres critics of the controversial technique expressed concern on learning that two weekend courses were being run this year by the Alternatives programme based at St James Church, Piccadilly.

Mr Skidmore said he had received an assurance from the Rector of St James that he would not allow such sessions to take place in the church building. They will now be held at a North Hack-

ney leisure centre in April.

The seven-year-old Alternatives programme, which gives its address as St James's and uses the church's phone number, allows people to explore alternative spiritual paths.

Alternatives director Mr William Bloom, who has close links with the Findhorn Foundation, has told the "Gazette" that the two holotropic sessions are not the first to be run on the programme, as a weekend was held two years ago.

Mr Bloom regularly holds different workshops at the Foundation, and will take part shortly in a conference on "The Western Mysteries." His wife, Sabrina Dearborn, is a Foundation trustee, one of the 12 who withdrew the breathwork sessions when faced with the SCO report.

Mr Bloom admitted that those unfamiliar with the technique could be alarmed by sounds of screaming from participants. Sessions, which can lead to vomiting, shaking and screaming, come with a strong health warning, to screen out pregnant women and those with cardiovascular, epileptic, and psychiatric conditions.

Mr Bloom said he had noticed that those who he thought were afraid of their own emotions were frightened of breathwork because it seemed so intense.

"It's an easy target," he said, and then added that he did not think it was much more intense than a "good rave or disco".

He said the Alternatives programme was for some a gateway into the church, not a departure from it.